

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 11229 201731Z

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, US, ELAB

SUBJECT: EFL-US RELATIONS

SUMMARY: EGYPTIAN UNIONS WANT RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN LABOR AND ARE NOW IN PROCESS OF INITIATING CONTACTS. EFL BELIEVES RELATIONS POSSIBLE IN SPITE OF POLITICAL DIFFERENCES. IT ALSO EAGER FOR US TRAINING AND LABOR ORIENTED AID EFFORT. WE EXPLORING POSSIBLE PROJECTS WITHUSAID HERE AND REQUEST DEPT VIEW OF CURRENT UNION ATTITUDES TOWARDS COOPERATION WITH EGYPTIAN LABOR. END SUMMARY.

1. DCM AND LRO HAD CORDIAL MEETING WITH SAAD AHMED, NEWLY-ELECTED PRESIDENT OF EGYPTIAN FEDERATION OF LABOR, AUGUST 18. MEETING RESULTED FROM BROAD HINTS FROM EFL THAT CALL BY DCM WOULD BE FAVORABLY RECEIVED. BEYOND MUTUAL EXPRESSIONS OF PLEASURE THAT BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE EVOLVED FAVORABLY IN PAST TWO YEARS, CONVERSATION PRODUCED FOLLOWING DISTILLATION OF EFL THINKING ON ITS RELATION TO U.S.

2. RELATIONS WITH U.S. LABOR MOVEMENT. EFL GENUINELY WANTS RELATIONS WITH U.S. LABOR, ON BOTH FEDERATION AND CONSTITUENT UNION LEVELS. THE EFL IS NOW IN PROCESS OF SELECTING THOSE AMERICAN UNIONS WITH WHICH IT FEELS CONTACT WOULD BE MOST BENEFICIAL AND WILL INITIATE CORRESPONDENCE AS A PRELUDE TO BROADER CONTACT. AHMED AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE MUCH

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CAIRO 11229 201731Z

RESPECT FOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF US LABOR. THEY ALSO AWARE OF

THEIR OWN UNIONS' INSITUATIONAL SHORTCOMINGS AND, IN THEIR VIEW, US-EGYPTIAN LABOR RELATIONS COULD GO FAR TOWARDS OVERCOMING THESE.

3. EFL UNDERSTANDS MATTER IS A SENSITIVE ONE. IT RECOGNIZES US LABOR'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH HISTADRUH BUT STRESSES THAT EGYPTIAN ARE NOT SEEKING TO INTERRUPT THESE TIES. EGYPTIAN LABOR WOULD, HOWEVER, LIKE TO SEE GROWING US APPRECIATION OF ARAB VIEWPOINT EXTEND TO LABOR MOVEMENT AND ITS POLICY MAKERS, STILL, EFL BELIEVES THAT POLITICAL PROBLEMS CAN BE SET ASIDE IN TERMS OF BILATERAL LABOR RELATIONS. THE EFL'S OVERRIDING INTEREST AND RESPONSIBILITY IS PROMOTION OF WELFARE OF EGYPTIAN WORKER; COOPERATION WITH US LABOR (WHICH THE EFL ADMITS IT BADLY NEEDS) IS FACED WITH NO OBSTACLES FROM THE EGYPTIAN SIDE. (DCM HEARTILY AGREED WITH DESIRABILITY OF CLOSE TIES BETWEEN US AND EGYPT, BUT POINTED OUT THAT RELATIONS IN LABOR FIELD WAS MATTER TO BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN RESPECTIVE LABOR MOVEMENTS.)

4. EFL HAS CLOSE TIES TO SEVERAL WESTERN EUROPEAN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS AND DOES NOT CONCEAL ITS TIES TO LABOR ORGANIZATIONS OF SOCIALIST BLOC. IT IS DETERMINED, HOWEVER, TO AVOID POLITICAL AFFILIATION WITH EITHER SIDE AND TO PURSUE ITS OWN "ARAB SOCIALIST" COURSE IN EXTRACTING FOR ITS MEMBERS' BENEFIT THE BEST THAT FOREIGN RELATIONS CAN PRODUCE.

5. TRAINING. THE EFL IS EAGER TO PARTICIPATE IN USG-SPONSORED LABOR TRAINING PROGRAMS, EITHER IN US OR IN EGYPT. (COMMENT: WE WILL BE MEETING WITH EFL OFFICIALS TO TRY TO DETERMINE SPECIFIC AREAS IN WHICH TRAINING IS MOST NEEDED AND PARTICULAR EXPERTISE LEVELS FOR WHICH SUCH TRAINING SHOULD BE KEYED. WE NOTE WITH REGRET THAT EFL IS UNABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MOST DOL TRAINING PROGRAMS BECAUSE ARABIC TRANSLATION APPARENTLY SELDOM PROVIDED FOR. EGYPTIAN LABOR LEADERS, INFLUENTIAL OR COMERS, RARELY HAVE MORE THAN MINIMAL COMMAND OF ENGLISH. WE ALSO NOTE THAT MEMBERSHIP OF EFL ALONE EXCEEDS POPULATIONS OF MANY COUNTRIES WHICH ARE ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM SPANISH OR FRENCH TRANSLATION. WE URGE DEPARTMENT TO BRING THIS PROBLEM TO ATTENTION OF DOL.)

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PAGE 03 CAIRO 11229 201731Z

6. LABOR-ORIENTED AID EFFORT. EFL AWARE OF MASSIVE AID PROGRAM IN EGYPT AND HOPES SOME OF THIS ASSISTANCE COULD BE DIRECTED TO MEET LABOR NEEDS.

7. COMMENT. AHMED SAID NOTHING IN THE MEETING HE HAD NOT ALREADY MADE CLEAR DURING PREVIOUS CONTACTS, BUT HE IS NOW SPEAKING OFFICIALLY FOR EFL. WE HAVE GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO COUNTER SUSPICION OF US THAT YEARS OF ESTRANGEMENT AND

HOSTILE PROPAGANDA HAVE INGRAINED IN MUCH OF EGYPTIAN LABOR. WE COULD ALSO EXPECT BENEFITS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH EFL TO EXTEND BEYOND BORDERS OF EGYPT, THROUGH ITS PREEMINENCE IN LABOR CIRCLES THROUGHOUT ARAB WORLD. WE HAVE BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO CREATE EXPECTATIONS WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO FULFILL, BUT BELIEVE LABOR IS LEGITIMATE FIELD FOR SOME SORT OF AID ASSISTANCE. ONE EXAMPLE MIGHT BE THAT OF CREATION OF A VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER. SUCH A PROJECT WOULD RESPOND TO PRESSING EGYPTIAN NEED FOR SKILLED LABOR AND WOULD ALSO MEET CRITERION OF BEING DIRECTLY RELATED TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORT. EMBASSY IS EXPLORING POSSIBLE PROJECTS WITH USAID.

8. WE DO NOT AT THIS TIME PROPOSE OPEN USG INVOLVEMENT IN BRINGING AMERICAN AND EGYPTIAN LABOR TOGETHER. NEVERTHELESS, WE WILL SOON HAVE TO PROVIDE VISIBLE MANIFESTATIONS OF OUR FRIENDSHIP AT LEAST IN FORM OF PROGRAMS ACCESSIBLE AND USEFUL TO LABOR HERE.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT'S CURRENT READING OF VIEWS OF SELECTED U.S. UNIONS ON CONTACTS AND POSSIBLE COOPERATIVE EFFORTS WITH EGYPTIAN LABOR MOVEMENT.

10. THIS MESSAGE STADIS SINCE QUESTION OF BILATERAL UNION RELATIONS OF POTENTIAL SENSITIVITY FOR AFL/CIO. NEA/RA REQUESTED TO MAKE FURTHER SUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.
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